

Expect.

Employ.

Empower.



Alabama State Rehabilitation Council 2024 Annual Report

*Vocational Rehabilitation Service
Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services*

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Expect. **Employ. Empower.**

As chairperson of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), it is my privilege to share this year's annual report on behalf of the SRC. This report reflects the dedication, collaboration, and tireless efforts of Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) staff, council members, and partners to advocate for and support individuals with disabilities in achieving their employment and independence goals.



Throughout this year, we have worked closely with ADRS to ensure the voices and needs of the disability community are at the forefront of decision-making. Together, we have made meaningful strides in program accessibility, workforce development, and the delivery of essential services. This report outlines the SRC's accomplishments in the past fiscal year and its strong efforts to positively impact the lives of Alabamians with disabilities.

As we look ahead, the SRC remains steadfast in its commitment to improving opportunities and outcomes for people with disabilities. We will continue to champion policies and programs that empower individuals with disabilities to lead fulfilling lives. Together, we are making a lasting impact.

Kathy Lovell, Chairperson
State Rehabilitation Council



The partnership between the SRC and the ADRS is critical to meeting the standards created by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act. This valuable partnership allows us to develop and maintain programs leading to community integration, competitive integrated employment, and independence for people with disabilities.

As we enter 2025, the vocational rehabilitation leadership would like to express our appreciation to the SRC for your commitment to excellence and service. The state of Alabama is prepared to respond to current and emerging needs because of your active participation. Whether you represent individuals with disabilities, protection and advocacy, workforce partners, independent living centers, business and industry, education, community rehabilitation partners, parent education centers, labor, or third-party insurers, your collective voices contribute to the success of others.

We look forward to working with you to achieve the goals and objectives set forth in the state workforce plan as we build for the future by supporting innovative service delivery solutions.

Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw, Commissioner
Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services



A unique partnership:

Vocational Rehabilitation Service and the State Rehabilitation Council

In January 1995, as mandated by the Alabama Legislature, Vocational Rehabilitation Service was moved from the State Department of Education to the newly created Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS). This milestone event created a unique partnership between the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the newly named Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services. Working in partnership with ADRS, SRC provides valuable input in administrative codes and rules necessary to regulate Alabama's vocational rehabilitation services.

Working together, the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services and the State Rehabilitation Council strengthen the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of vocational rehabilitation services for all Alabamians with disabilities.

The mission of the council is ...

... to provide support and assistance to the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services through program planning, policy development, and delivery of services, thus preparing Alabama's citizens with disabilities for competitive employment.

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL
Membership Composition

Mandated Representation	Current Number of Representatives	Number of People with Disabilities	Number of Parents
Commissioner	1	0	0
State Independent Living Council (SILC)	4	4	0
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (State Department of Education)	1	0	0
Client Assistance Program	1	0	0
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor	1	0	0
Community Rehabilitation Programs	1	0	0
Business, Industry and Labor	6	0	0
Physical Disabilities	10	10	0
Cognitive / Learning Disabilities	0	0	0
Sensory Disabilities	5	4	0
Mental Illness	2	2	0
Intellectual Disability	0	0	0
Advocacy Organization	1	1	0
American Indian Program Representative	0	0	0
WIA Representative	1	0	0
Former or Current Recipient of VRS Services	17	17	0
Parent Training Center Representative	1	0	0
Assistive Technology Program Representative	1	0	0
Parent or family member of a person with a disability	1	0	1
Total	54	38	1

SRC membership consists of persons with disabilities, family members, and advocates, service providers, and representatives of the business industry and labor community.

Members are appointed by the governor, and all have a personal interest in ensuring that Alabama's citizens with disabilities receive the services and supports they need to become productive and self-sufficient through gainful employment. Membership is geographically and culturally diverse to assure a broad view into decisions that impact vocational rehabilitation services.

* Actual membership is 32, with some individuals representing more than one category, but includes those who retired, resigned, or had their terms expire in 2024. Persons with disabilities comprise a majority (17) of members. This number does not include persons appointed to succeed those rotating off on or after 8/31/24.



SRC Functions

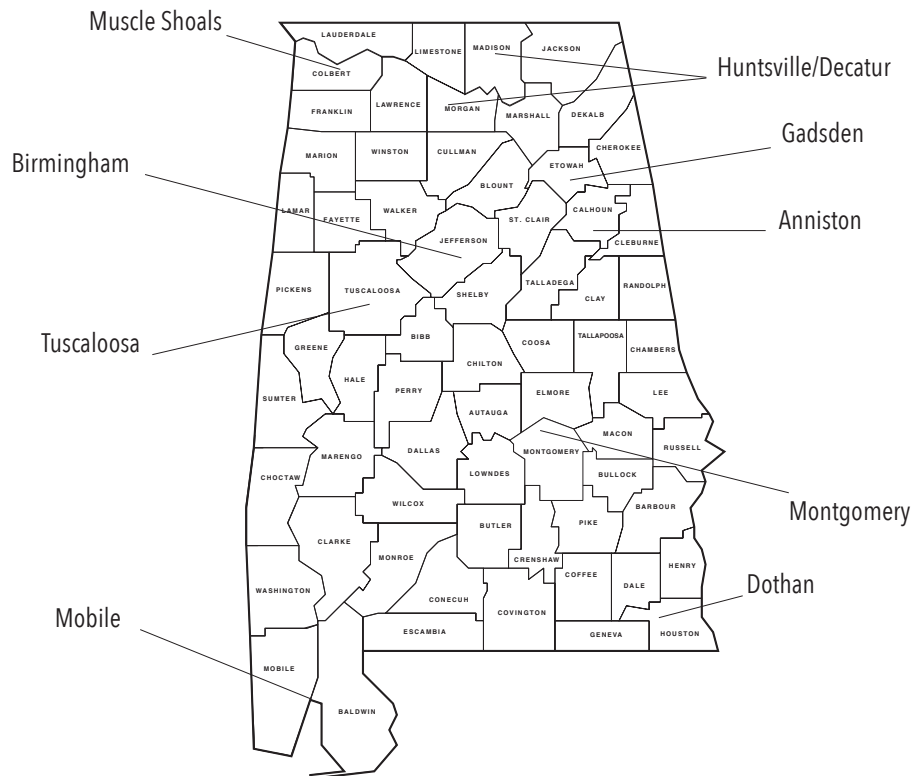
- To review and analyze the State Plan and advise ADRS regarding its related responsibilities within the plan
- In partnership with ADRS, to develop and review goals and priorities, evaluate the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program, and submit reports of progress to the Rehabilitation Services Administration commissioner
- To advise ADRS regarding authorized activities under the Rehabilitation Act, and to assist in preparation of the State Plan and its amendments, and to carry out other requirements of the Rehabilitation Act
- To review and analyze the effectiveness of consumer and other surveys
- To provide for the coordination and establishment of working relationships among ADRS, the State Independent Living Council, and independent living centers
- To coordinate council activities with activities of other councils
- To perform other functions consistent with the purpose of the Rehabilitation Act
- To prepare and submit an annual report of council activities to the governor and the ADRS commissioner

Local advisory councils meet regularly to ensure a voice for consumers at the grass roots level.

In FY 24, topics of discussion included:

- Updates on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) including Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and Department of Justice (DOJ) ADA enforcement actions
 - Updates on state legislation that passed in 2024 that affects individuals with disabilities
 - Unmet needs of persons with disabilities to inform the Governor’s Office on Disability
 - Proposed Federal legislation that could impact people with disabilities
 - Infectious diseases update
 - Information from ADMH Consumer Empowerment Office
 - Accessing Potential Through Assistive Technology (APTAT) programs and services
- * Meetings were held via Zoom due to transportation issues for members with significant disabilities

These advisory groups continue to increase opportunities to obtain consumer input at the local level and as recruiting grounds for SRC



SRC performance

During quarterly meetings on March 2, May 14, Aug. 13, and Oct. 5, 2024, the SRC sought to perform the following functions:

Review and provide input on consumer satisfaction surveys

- Received information on the FY 23 Blind Services Satisfaction Survey
- Received information on the FY 23 Deaf Services Satisfaction Survey
- Made no recommendations for changes to these surveys

Review and provide input on impartial hearing officer (IHO) list

- Received information on number of hearings conducted during 2024
- There are five impartial hearing officers, but two are retiring
- Approved changes to IHO list to add three new hearing officers

Review and update SRC Resource Plan

- Changed mileage reimbursement to 67 cents per mile

Review and provide input on Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD)

- SRC members were provided information on the Agency's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) and recommended no significant changes
- SRC members did not provide input on training for VR counselors

Review and provide input on state plan update

- No comments were received on the state plan update or attachments
- Recommended no changes
- Received information on how CSNA was used to get goals and priorities for the state plan

Training and/or information on the following subjects:

- ADRS Budget
- VR Process
- AL Interagency Autism Coordinating Council
- Regional Autism Network
- APT AT Program Update
- Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)
- VR production and average hourly wages
- WIOA performance indicators
- State and Federal legislative updates
- Alabama Parent Education Center/ESL/English as a second language

Coordinate council activities with activities of other councils

- Provided annual reports and resource plans to other SRCs upon request
- Posted Alabama SRC annual reports on NCSRC website
- The SRC liaison continued to participate in the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Council conference calls and annual training conferences

Establish working relationships among the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS), the State Independent Living Council (SILC), and independent living centers (ILCs)

- The SRC has made its meetings open to members of the public including those of the ILCs or SILC
- Some SRC members attend SILC meetings and report back to the SRC any significant information
- One member of the SRC is the chair of the SILC and shares information from SILC meetings with SRC members

Perform other functions consistent with the purpose of the Rehabilitation Act

- Signed new conflict of interest form for new members

SRC subcommittee activities

Executive Subcommittee

Chair: Kathy Lovell

Vice Chair: Vacant

Immediate Past President: Karl Wade

Subcommittee Chair: Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw

Staff Liaison: Graham Sisson

Vision Statement: To conduct planning for and administration of SRC meetings

Responsibilities

- Schedule and make arrangements for quarterly meetings
- Plan the SRC agenda
- Report accomplishments
- Nominate officers
- Facilitate appointment of subcommittee chairs and SRC members
- Update SRC Resource Plan
- Assist in preparation of SRC budget
- Plan SRC orientation

Accomplishments/Activities

- Scheduled and made arrangements for quarterly meetings, planned the agendas and reported SRC accomplishments
- Amended the SRC Resource Plan to increase the mileage rate to 67 cents per mile
- Set meeting dates for 2024 with SRC approval
- Chair Kathy Lovell appointed new members to the Consumer Services/Program Evaluation and Legislative Subcommittees

Business Relations and Employment Subcommittee

Chair: Kathy Lovell

Vice Chair: Vacant

Members: Keith Patterson • Michelle Galipeau* • Heath Hendrix* • Carl Flemons* • Andrew Richards* • Tiffany Moore • Eric Peebles • Phee Friend* • Jaime Mitchell • Caitlin Simpson • Star Wray*

Staff Liaison: Bobbi Stephenson

Vision Statement: To enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities and employer satisfaction with VR services

This subcommittee continued to maintain the following priorities:

1. OFCCP Section 503, 7-percent people with disabilities hiring quota for federal contractors
2. Business and labor market trends that parallel or do not parallel consumer goals
3. E-Verify for employers and agency
4. Federal employment issues under Schedule A
5. Department incentives to promote hiring and retention of people with disabilities

*Rotated off

SRC subcommittee activities

Activities

Discussed the following:

- The subcommittee continued to discuss marketplace for employers and training for employers
- Suggested that the minimum wage for Paid Work Experience (PWE) be raised to be competitive with Work Based Learning (WBL) so that they have the same hourly rate.

Legislative/Public Information Subcommittee

Chair: Joey Taff

Members: Jack Franklin • Michael Talley • Ashley McLeroy • Dave Riley • Zach Wooley • Jason Martin

Staff Liason: Jill West

Vision Statement: To inform SRC members of existing and new legislation which affects the VRS program and people with disabilities, and to advocate for legislation, policies, and practices that will enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities

Responsibilities

- Same as vision statement above

Activities

- Monitored state and federal legislation that affects individuals with disabilities and provided information on pending legislation

Consumer Services/Program Evaluation Subcommittee

Chair: Gian Carlo Carattini

Vice Chair: Vacant

Members: Marie Holliday • Kim Mensi* • Isaac Beavers • Phillip Pearson • Andrea Mixson • Sherrie Moultrie • Tiffany Moore • Eric Peebles • Andrew Richards* • Michael Talley* • Jason Martin • Christy Rothermund-Franklin

Staff Liaison: Kelly Lawson and Kristine Klopp

Vision Statement: To enhance consumer satisfaction with services, service providers, and employment, and to assist VRS in developing and implementing strategies to ensure consumer satisfaction

Responsibilities

- Facilitate council review of the agency's consumer satisfaction survey and results
- Collaborate with the agency in conducting the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment every three years

*Rotated off

SRC subcommittee activities

Activities

- Reviewed Blind Consumer Satisfaction Survey and its results
- Received information on Deaf Consumer Satisfaction Survey and results
- Made no recommendations or changes to existing blind or deaf surveys
- Announced and discussed current events for consumers
- Provided updates on member programs
- Suggested that surveys be in native languages of those responding to it

Membership/Nomination Subcommittee

Chair: Jack Franklin

Members: Kevin Orr

Staff Liaison: Graham Sisson

Vision Statement: To maintain SRC membership so that it meets federal law and enables the SRC to perform its duties

Responsibilities

- Maintain current membership list
- Recruit new members to fill vacancies
- Secure re-appointments of existing members where eligible
- Assist in orientation of new members
- Assist in identifying training needs of SRC members

Activities

- Through the SRC liaison, updated the SRC list on the Alabama Secretary of State's website
- Facilitated reappointment of eligible members
- Nominated members to fill vacancies and facilitated their appointment
- Gave update on SRC membership status at most SRC meetings

Bylaws Revision Subcommittee

Chair: Lorenzo Brown

Members: Bob Lujano • Kevin Orr • Karl Wade

Staff Liaison: Graham Sisson

Vision Statement: To maintain SRC Bylaws so that they are consistent with federal law and allow for smooth operation of the SRC

Responsibilities

- Monitor effectiveness of bylaws
- Recommend any necessary changes on an annual basis

SRC subcommittee activities

Activities

- Continued to monitor the effectiveness of the bylaws and will recommend any necessary changes yearly

Deaf Advisory Subcommittee

SRC Liaison: Marcus Washington*

Staff Liaison: Ben Hollingsworth

Vision Statement: To inform the SRC and the VR agency of issues or input for the VR program for people who are deaf

Responsibilities

- Report on issues related to the deaf and assist in the development of a strategic plan for people who are deaf

Activities

- Continued to inform SRC members of issues in the deaf community
- Discussed training conferences on deaf issues

* *Rotated off*

Blind Advisory Subcommittee

SRC Liaison: Michael Talley*

Staff Liaison: Dana Barber

Vision Statement: To inform the SRC and the VR agency of issues or input for the VR program for people who are blind or visually impaired.

Responsibilities

- Report on issues related to the blind or visually impaired in the development of a strategic plan for people who are blind or visually impaired.

Activities

- Informed SRC members of the results of the 2023 Blind Satisfaction Survey
- Shared information from the Blind Advisory meetings

*Rotated off

2024 highlights

Vocational Rehabilitation Service



Wages and plans	FY24
Average Hourly Wage of Closed Rehab Cases	\$15.86
Average Annual Wage of Closed Rehab Cases	\$27,673
Applications taken	9,307
Initial Plans Developed	7,631



Above, Lorenzo Brown and Bobbi Stephenson catch up during a recent SRC meeting. Below left, Lillian Butler and Kim Mensi share a few stories as they prepare for the October meeting. Below right, Karl Wade and Graham Sisson always enjoy a chance to meet with their fellow SRC members.



SRC membership



Kathy Lovell
Chair, employer
Birmingham
Reappointed September 2022



Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw
Commissioner
Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services
Montgomery



Consumer
Isaac Beavers
Huntsville



APEC
Gian Carlo Carattini
Montgomery



Employer
Michelle Galipeau
Children's Hospital
Hoover
Rotated off 8/31/24



Consumer
SILC
Jack Franklin
Vina



WIA Board
Representative
Phee Friend
Montgomery
Rotated off 8/31/24



Parent
Christy Rothermund-Franklin
Madison



Employer
Mercedes Hawkins
Children's Hospital
Center Point



Employer
Onin
Heath Hendrix
Tuscaloosa
Rotated off 8/31/24



Consumer
Marie Holliday
Altoona



Community
Rehabilitation Program
Representative
Joni House
Valley



Consumer
Bob Lujano
Birmingham



Consumer
Kathleen Ryan-McDonald
Owens Crossroads



Assistive Technology
Representative
Accessing Potential Through
Assistive Technology
Ashley McLeroy
Warrior



Employer
Jaime Mitchell
Veterans Affairs
Tuscaloosa



CAP Representative
Andrea Mixson
Pelham

SRC membership



Consumer
Kim Mensi
Montgomery
Rotated off 8/31/24



Special Education
Tiffany Moore
Montgomery



Employer
Sherri Moultrie
UAB
Birmingham



Labor
Keith Patterson
Opelika



Consumer
Phillip Pearson
Birmingham



Consumer
Eric Peebles
Mobile



VRS Counselor
Andrew Richards
Montgomery
Rotated off 8/31/24



Consumer/Veteran
Dave Riley
Semmes



Consumer
Joey Taff
Montgomery



Consumer
Rodrick Skene
Talladega



Consumer
Michael Talley
Bessemer
Rotated off 8/31/24



Consumer
Karl Wade
Montgomery

SRC membership



Consumer
Marcus Washington
Pelham
Rotated off 8/31/24



Consumer
Zach Woolley
Birmingham



WIA Board Representative
Tammy Wilkinson
Montgomery



Consumer
Roosevelt Wright
Huntsville



**Community Rehabilitation
Program Representative**
Star Wray
Achievement Center
Opelika
Rotated off 8/31/24



VRS Counselor
Tankiya Weldon
Montgomery



SRC Conflict of Interest Policy

Statement of Policy

No member of the council shall cast a vote on any matter that would provide direct financial benefit to the member or the member's organization or otherwise give the appearance of a conflict of interest under state law. 34 CFR Part 361.17(g). When conflicts of interest are identified, the council member to whom the conflict applies must abstain from voting on the issue causing the conflict.

Required Disclosure

Each council member shall disclose orally or in writing all conflicts of interest, including those which are unclear or potential. Such disclosure shall be made to the chairperson of the council.

Effective Date

This Conflict of Interest Policy shall become effective immediately upon approval by a majority of the council. Upon such approval, this policy is incorporated by reference into the council bylaws.

Approved: November 29, 2000

SPECIAL RECOGNITION AND THANKS FOR A JOB WELL DONE TO FORMER MEMBERS:

*Heath Hendrix, Andrew Richards, Michelle Galipeau,
Kim Mensi, Marcus Washington, and Michael Talley*

Prepared by:



Alabama Department of
REHABILITATION SERVICES

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION

Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw

Commissioner

602 S. Lawrence St., Montgomery, AL 36104
(334) 293-7500 • 1-800-441-7607 • ALABAMARELAY.COM
rehab.alabama.gov

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